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ABSTRACT

This paper provides statistical data on 20 large city school districts across the United States, using information made available by the National Center for Education Statistics, the Bureau of Census, and the Department of Commerce. It includes information on student enrollment in 20 cities whose pupil membership in 1980-81 ranged from one million pupils for New York City to a little less than 60,000 pupils for San Francisco. Data are also provided for each district on: classroom teachers with full-time equivalencies (FTE), pupil/teacher ratio, and number of schools and days in session. In addition, detailed statistics are presented on school finance in each of the districts, including data on: financial trends from 1978-79 through 1980-81, per pupil outstanding debt, revenues, expenditures, debt, and bond ratings. The cities covered are Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. (AOS)

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RESEARCH REPORT

STATISTICS OF LARGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1983 EDITION

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BY
JAMES GORDON WARD
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

A REPORT OF THE
RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF THE
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO

APRIL 1983

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CONTENTS

Introduction 2

Pupils, Teachers, and Schools 3

- Pupil Membership 3
- Classroom Teachers 6
- Pupil/Teacher Ratios 6
- Number of Schools and Days in Session 9

City School Finances 11

- Trends 11
- Revenues 11
- Expenditures 14
- Debt 16
- Bond Ratings 16

INTRODUCTION

The first edition of "Statistics of Large City School Districts" was issued by the AFT Department of Research in February, 1981, and it became one of the most popular of the Research Report series. That report contained data through the 1978-79 school year. The report proved to be particularly useful to local union leaders in urban school districts who desired comparative data on enrollments, numbers of teachers, salaries, and school finances. That first edition relied heavily on information produced by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. One of the victims of federal budget cuts by the Reagan Administration has been the data gathering and reporting activities of various federal agencies. Only recently has the data been available to update the first edition of "Statistics of Large City School Districts." This revised edition primarily uses information published by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Questions about the sources of data in this report, the meaning and use of this information, or other questions concerning large city school district data should be directed to the:

Department of Research
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
11 Dupont Circle, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

PUPILS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLS

The 1981 edition of this report began by noting that large city school districts had been "experiencing unprecedented difficulties" over the previous ten years, including problems of declining enrollments, financial crisis, and maintaining quality programs in times of adversity. Conditions have not changed since the publication of that report. Most of the statistics in this section will show a continuation of previous trends. Information in later sections will indicate that these trends will likely continue into the foreseeable future.

Pupil Membership

The twenty cities in this report ranged in size of pupil membership in 1980-81 from New York City, the largest with almost one million pupils, to San Francisco with slightly under 60,000 pupils (see Table 1). These twenty cities are the largest U.S. cities according to the 1970 Census. Use of the 1970 largest city list allows continuity over time, so that comparisons with past years can be easily made. These twenty city school districts had a total 1980-81 enrollment of 3,870,515, or about 9.7 percent of all U.S. public school enrollment.

Six "mega-school districts" educated about 6.4 percent of all U.S. public school pupils in 1980-81. These school districts included New York (943,701 pupils), Los Angeles (526,768), Chicago (458,497), Philadelphia (223,889), Detroit (202,859), and Houston (194,033). Six additional city school districts had enrollments exceeding 100,000. These included Phoenix (169,159), Dallas (130,346), Baltimore (129,984), Memphis (111,444), San Diego (111,087), and Washington (100,049).

There are eight districts in this report with enrollments of less than 100,000: Milwaukee (87,873), New Orleans (85,105), Cleveland (82,144), Boston (67,007), Indianapolis (66,031), St. Louis (63,293), San Antonio (60,994), and San Francisco (58,378).

It should be noted that there are other school districts in the United States which are larger than some of the districts in the report which are not included here because they are county school districts.

None of the twenty large city school districts gained in student enrollment between 1976-77 and 1980-81. Losses ranged from 4.5 percent in Phoenix to 33.1 percent in Cleveland (see Figure 1). Those city school districts with losses in

TABLE 1

PUPIL MEMBERSHIP IN LARGE CITIES
1976-77 THROUGH 1980-81

	Pupil Membership				
	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
New York	1,077,028	1,036,135	998,871	962,973	943,701
Los Angeles	601,429	586,725	665,754	549,897	526,768
Chicago	524,221	511,113	470,100	477,339	458,497
Philadelphia	260,787	253,798	244,417	231,959	223,889
Detroit	236,279	237,592	230,407	211,377	202,859
Houston	210,025	206,998	201,960	193,907	194,033
Phoenix	177,204	183,716	175,467	169,875	169,159
Dallas	141,407	134,590	132,061	130,357	130,346
Baltimore	159,038	152,153	145,503	136,187	129,984
Memphis	120,322	115,637	114,686	113,729	111,444
San Diego	120,667	118,558	116,396	113,704	111,087
Washington	125,848	119,875	113,858	106,156	100,049
Milwaukee	109,151	101,192	95,727	91,940	87,873
New Orleans	93,364	91,434	89,010	86,783	83,105
Cleveland	122,727	114,979	104,676	92,409	82,144
Boston	73,215	76,889	71,284	68,951	67,007
Indianapolis	82,102	78,321	73,655	69,729	66,031
St. Louis	82,804	77,743	73,060	68,964	63,293
San Antonio	65,929	64,277	63,209	61,816	60,994
San Francisco	68,736	64,570	61,990	55,147	58,378

Source: National Center for Education Statistics data.

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FIGURE 1

CHANGE IN PUPIL MEMBERSHIP IN LARGE CITIES
1976-77 TO 1980-81

1. Loss of Less Than 10 Percent

Phoenix	(- 4.5%)	Houston	(- 7.6%)
Memphis	(- 7.4%)	Dallas	(- 7.8%)
San Antonio	(- 7.5%)	San Diego	(- 7.9%)

2. Loss Between 10 and 15 Percent

New Orleans	(-11.0%)	Chicago	(-12.5%)
Boston	(-12.1%)	Detroit	(-14.1%)
New York	(-12.4%)	Philadelphia	(-14.1%)
Los Angeles	(-12.4%)		

3. Loss Between 15 and 20 Percent

San Francisco	(-15.1%)	Milwaukee	(-19.5%)
Baltimore	(-18.3%)	Indianapolis	(-19.6%)

4. Loss Exceeding 20 Percent

Washington	(-20.5%)	Cleveland	(-33.1%)
St. Louis	(-23.6%)		

Source: Table 1.

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4/83

pupils of less than ten percent were all "Sun Belt" cities in the South or Southwest. These were Phoenix, Memphis, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, and San Diego. Three of these districts are in Texas, the only large state that is experiencing significant enrollment increases statewide.

Most of the largest districts experienced four year enrollment declines between ten and fifteen percent. These included New Orleans, Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia. San Francisco, Baltimore, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis were hit more severely, with declines between fifteen and twenty percent between 1976-77 and 1980-81.

Three districts reported enrollment declines exceeding twenty percent over the four years. Washington lost 20.5 percent of its enrollment, St. Louis lost 23.6 percent, and Cleveland's enrollment dropped 33.1 percent.

Between 1976-77 and 1980-81, the twenty cities together lost almost 585,000 pupils, or 13.1 percent of the 1976-77 enrollment.

Classrooom Teachers

The number of classroom teachers is based on a full-time equivalent (FTE) measure (see Table 2). New York, the largest of the city school districts, had 43,105 FTE teachers in 1980-81, a drop of about 1500 from 1979-80, and a four year decrease of 5,800. Los Angeles reported a drop of almost 9,000 FTE teachers from 1976-77 to 1980-81, while Chicago only lost less than 1500. Over the four year period, Philadelphia reported a loss of about 900 FTE teachers and Detroit indicated a gain of over 500. Other city school districts showing a gain in FTE classroom teachers between 1976-77 and 1980-81 were Houston, Dallas, Memphis, and St. Louis. Particularly large decreases were reported in Baltimore, San Diego, Washington, Cleveland and San Francisco.

Pupil/Teacher Ratios

In 1980-81, the pupil/teacher ratios for the twenty largest city school districts ranged from a low of 13.1 in Boston to a high of 26.6 in Los Angeles (see Table 3). Other large city school districts with low pupil/teacher ratios were St. Louis (17.0), Philadelphia (17.1), Dallas (17.4), and Baltimore (17.9). Teacher layoffs since 1980-81 have produced markedly higher pupil/teacher ratios in some of these cities. Between 1977-78 and 1980-81, only four of these districts increased their pupil/teacher ratios, while the ratio decreased in 16 of the districts. The primary reason for the decrease in pupil/teacher ratios in most large city school districts has been the increase in classroom

TABLE 2

CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN LARGE CITIES
(FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS)
1976-77 THROUGH 1980-81

	Classroom Teachers (in full-time equivalents)				
	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
New York	48,931	50,580	52,547	44,641	43,105
Los Angeles	28,700	29,216	29,200	22,670	19,810
Chicago	23,081	23,160	25,444	22,573	21,611
Philadelphia	13,957	13,222	11,775	13,422	13,063
Detroit	8,847	8,847	8,997	9,315	9,361
Houston	9,237	9,189	9,902	9,926	9,826
Phoenix	7,969	8,060	8,400	7,859	7,663
Dallas	6,668	6,431	7,417	7,399	7,483
Baltimore	8,240	8,165	7,762	7,542	7,258
Memphis	5,675	5,675	5,698	5,845	5,898
San Diego	5,400	5,349	5,700	5,128	4,578
Washington	6,057	6,022	5,964	5,946	5,238
Milwaukee	5,366	5,066	5,152	4,904	4,771
New Orleans	4,380	4,402	4,324	4,500	4,010
Cleveland	5,303	5,032	4,399	4,399	4,145
Boston	NA	4,137	4,221	5,102	5,115
Indianapolis	3,524	3,868	3,715	3,358	3,392
St. Louis	3,082	3,490	3,752	3,698	3,733
San Antonio	3,202	3,124	3,133	3,121	3,095
San Francisco	4,100	3,853	4,200	3,360	2,999

Source: National Center for Education Statistics data.

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4/83

TABLE 3

PUPIL/TEACHER RATIOS IN LARGE CITIES
1977-78 THROUGH 1980-81

	Pupil/Teacher Ratios			
	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
New York	20.5	19.0	21.6	21.9
Los Angeles	20.1	22.8	24.3	26.6
Chicago	22.1	18.5	21.1	21.2
Philadelphia	18.5	20.8	17.3	17.1
Detroit	26.9	25.6	22.7	21.7
Houston	22.5	20.4	19.5	19.7
Phoenix	22.8	21.8	21.6	22.1
Dallas	20.9	17.8	17.6	17.4
Baltimore	18.6	18.7	18.1	17.9
Memphis	20.4	20.1	19.5	18.9
San Diego	22.2	21.8	22.2	24.3
Washington	19.9	19.1	17.9	19.1
Milwaukee	20.0	18.6	18.7	18.4
New Orleans	20.8	20.6	19.3	20.7
Cleveland	22.8	23.8	21.0	19.8
Boston	18.6	16.9	13.5	13.1
Indianapolis	20.2	19.8	20.8	19.5
St. Louis	22.3	19.5	18.6	17.0
San Antonio	20.6	20.2	19.8	19.7
San Francisco	16.8	16.1	16.4	19.5

Source: National Center for Education Statistics data.

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Department of Research
4/83

teaching staff for children with special needs, such as the handicapped, the disadvatnaged, and the limited English proficient. There is little or no evidence to indicate that pupil/teacher ratios have been declining in regular classrooms. In fact, the opposite seems to be happening.

Number of Schools and Days in Session

Table 4 shows the number of schools in each of the districts and the legal minimum number of days school must be in session. New York has the largest number of schools, with 987. Los Angeles (626) and Chicago (620) are the only other large city districts with over 500 schools.

Nine of the districts (New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, Washington, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Cleveland, and Boston) report that the legal minimum days that school must be in session is 180 days. Other districts report fewer days for the legal minimum.

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND MINIMUM DAYS IN SESSION

	Total Elementary and Secondary Schools	Minimum Number of Days in Session
New York	987	180
Los Angeles	626	175
Chicago	620	176
Philadelphia	272	180
Detroit	319	180
Houston	238	175
Phoenix	213	175
Dallas	193	175
Baltimore	202	180
Memphis	177	175
San Diego	161	175
Washington	188	180
Milwaukee	146	180
New Orleans	140	180
Cleveland	177	180
Boston	156	180
Indianapolis	117	175
St. Louis	150	174
San Antonio	91	175
San Francisco	107	175

Source: National Center for Education Statistics data.

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4/83

CITY SCHOOL FINANCES

Trends

Table 5 shows trends in revenues, expenditures, and debt between 1978-79 and 1980-81 for all U.S. school districts with enrollments of 50,000 or more. Over the two year period, general revenues for large school districts increased 18.4 percent. The largest increases in revenue came from state sources. State revenues for large school districts increased 31.7 percent over the period. Federal revenues rose 10.2 percent, while local revenues only went up 8.1 percent. Local property tax revenues hardly registered any gain at all, going up 0.3 percent. For dependent school districts, contributors from parent governments increased 3.6 percent over the two years. The biggest local revenue gains came from charges and miscellaneous revenues, which went up 40.4 percent. School lunch sales and interest earnings are the largest single items in this latter category.

The revenue trends show a broad picture of large school districts which are increasing their dependence on the state government for funding because of flat or declining local tax bases.

One year trends, from 1979-80 to 1980-81, show a similar picture, but provide more detail. Over the one year period, federal revenues actually dropped by 1.8 percent and it appears that property tax revenue increases were forced because of this. State revenues still outpaced revenues in general with an increase of 8.4 percent.

General expenditures went up 16.8 percent between 1978-79 and 1980-81, and 5.2 percent between 1979-80 and 1980-81. Expenditures for current operations besides wages and salaries, contradicting the notion that salary increases are causing financial problems in large school districts.

Total debt outstanding has been decreasing over the period 1978-79 to 1980-81.

Revenues

Per pupil revenues for the nineteen of the twenty large city school districts are shown in Table 6. Per pupil general revenues ranged from a low of $1854 in San Antonio to a high of $4567 in Boston. The median district was Los Angeles, with a per pupil general revenue of $3010. Large city districts with spending above the median were Boston, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, New York and St. Louis. Low revenue districts were San Antonio,

TABLE 5

FINANCIAL TRENDS OF LARGE U.S. SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1978-79 THROUGH 1980-81

	Percent Change	
	1978-79 to 1980-81	1979-80 to 1980-81
General Revenue	+18.4	+ 5.3
Federal Revenue	+10.2	- 1.8
State Revenue	+31.7	+ 8.4
Local Revenue	+ 8.1	+ 4.0
Property Tax	+ 0.3	+ 7.7
Parent Govt. Contrib.	+ 3.6	+ 2.9
Charges and Misc.	+40.4	+15.0
General Expenditures	+16.8	+ 5.2
Current Operations	+17.6	+ 5.5
Salaries and Wages	+14.5	+ 5.2
Other	+26.2	+ 6.3
Capital Outlay	+13.5	+ 2.5
Debt Outstanding	-18.6	- 9.4

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Finances of Public Schools Systems in 1978-79 and 1980-81.

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Department of Research
4/83

TABLE 6

PER PUPIL REVENUES OF LARGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1980-81

City School District	Per Pupil, General Revenue			
	Total	Federal	State	Local
New York	$3,047	$389	$1,217	$1,440
Los Angeles	3,010	305	2,148	554
Chicago	3,313	396	1,544	1,373
Philadelphia	3,275	517	1,493	1,265
Detroit	2,832	435	1,351	1,047
Houston	2,304	220	786	1,298
Phoenix	N O R E P O R T			
Dallas	2,425	255	856	1,315
Baltimore	2,571	394	1,217	960
Memphis	1,952	316	653	982
San Diego	2,868	417	1,439	1,012
Washington	3,351	533	--	2,818
Milwaukee	3,695	488	1,733	1,474
New Orleans	2,320	429	1,057	834
Cleveland	3,534	671	1,312	1,551
Boston	4,567	418	2,199	1,950
Indianapolis	2,640	362	1,304	974
St. Louis	3,028	551	1,288	1,189
San Antonio	1,854	394	1,093	367
San Francisco	3,193	505	2,200	488

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Finances of Public School Systems in 1980-81 (GF 81 No. 8).

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4/83

Memphis, Houston, New Orleans, Dallas, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Detroit, and San Diego.

Those large city school districts with the highest per pupil federal revenues were Cleveland ($671), St. Louis ($551), Washington ($533), Philadelphia ($517), and San Francisco ($505). The median district was San Diego ($417).

The effects of Proposition 13 in California and Proposition 2½ in Massachusetts on local revenues and state-local relations can be seen in the per pupil state revenues. Those cities with the highest per pupil state revenues were San Francisco ($2,200), Boston ($2,199), and Los Angeles ($2,148). Local tax revolts have placed a greater burden on state governments for local services. Particularly low per pupil state revenues were found in Memphis ($653), Houston ($786), and Dallas ($856).

The local revenue per pupil was highest in Washington ($2,818), which has no state revenue. Washington was followed by Boston ($1,950), Cleveland ($1,551), Milwaukee ($1,474), and New York ($1,440). The median district was St. Louis ($1,189).

As the trend data above showed, those districts with a heavier reliance on state revenues have been generally better off, since state revenues have been increasing faster than revenues from other sources.

Expenditures

Table 7 shows per pupil expenditures for 1980-81. Again, the lowest figure was in San Antonio ($1,743) and the highest in Boston ($4,244). Since revenues roughly equal expenditures, this is not surprising. The median district was St. Louis ($2,886). A more meaningful figure is total direct current expenditures per pupil. The highest ranking districts on this measure were Boston ($3,819), Cleveland ($3,695), Milwaukee ($3,561), San Francisco ($2,998), and Washington ($2,920). Ranking low were San Antonio ($1,665), Memphis ($1,787), and Houston ($1,821).

Per pupil expenditures for instruction showed less variation. They ranged from a high of $2,530 in Milwaukee to a low of $1,033 in New Orleans. The median figure was $1,569 (Dallas). Other districts with above average expenditures per pupil for instruction were Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, New York, and San Diego. Per pupil current expenditures for other than instruction varied from a low of $312 in San Antonio to a high of $1,688 in Cleveland. In some cases, high expenditures per pupil in this category represents an abnormally high overhead resulting from severely declining enrollment.

TABLE 7

PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES OF LARGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1980-81

City School District	Per Pupil General Expenditure				
		Current			
	Total	Total	Instruction	Other	Capital Outlay
New York	$3,004	$2,812	$1,795	$1,017	$136
Los Angeles	2,825	2,711	1,495	1,216	68
Chicago	2,735	2,554	1,476	1,088	100
Philadelphia	3,400	2,840	1,624	1,216	18
Detroit	2,964	2,622	1,611	1,011	287
Houston	2,133	1,821	1,362	459	257
Phoenix			NO REPORT		
Dallas	2,217	2,083	1,569	515	81
Baltimore	2,439	2,210	1,353	857	177
Memphis	1,897	1,787	1,201	586	67
San Diego	2,927	2,839	1,729	1,110	73
Washington	2,937	2,920	1,624	1,295	18
Milwaukee	3,699	3,567	2,530	1,038	31
New Orleans	2,066	2,003	1,033	969	24
Cleveland	3,865	3,695	2,007	1,688	139
Boston	4,244	3,819	2,471	1,348	173
Indianapolis	2,640	2,362	1,322	1,039	254
St. Louis	2,886	2,841	1,546	1,295	32
San Antonio	1,743	1,665	1,353	312	53
San Francisco	3,150	2,998	1,865	1,133	2

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Finances of Public School Systems in 1980-81 (GF 81, No. 8).

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TABLE 8

PER PUPIL DEBT OUTSTANDING OF LARGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1980-81

City School District	Per Pupil Debt Outstanding
New York	$ 737
Los Angeles	330
Chicago	2,015
Philadelphia	1,165
Detroit	883
Houston	1,082
Phoenix	NO REPORT
Dallas	1,027
Baltimore	1,092
Memphis	746
San Diego	149
Washington	--
Milwaukee	550
New Orleans	896
Cleveland	1,704
Boston	3,181
Indianapolis	12
St. Louis	125
San Antonio	445
San Francisco	562

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Finances of Public School Systems in 1980-81 (GF 81 No. 8).

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Department of Research
4/83

TABLE 9

BOND RATINGS OF LARGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1983

City School District	Bond Rating
New York	Ba 1 [1]
Los Angeles	Aa
Chicago	B
Philadelphia	B
Detroit	Baa
Houston	Aaa
Phoenix	Aa
Dallas	Aaa
Baltimore	A 1 [1]
Memphis	Aa [1]
San Diego	AA
Washington	NR
Milwaukee	AA [1]
New Orleans	A
Cleveland	Ba
Boston	Ba [1]
Indianapolis	Aa
St. Louis	Baa 1
San Antonio	A 1
San Francisco	Aa [2]

[1] City rating - dependent school district

[2] City issues all bonds for school district

NR = No rating listed, borrows through federal government

Ratings - Aaa, best quality
Aa, high quality
A, upper medium grade
Baa, medium grade
Ba, have speculative elements
B, lack characteristics of desirable investment

Strongest investments in category are designated by a "1" after the rating

Source: Moody's Municipal and Government Manual, 1983, Moody's Investors Service.

Finally, per pupil expenditures for capital outlay are shown. Again, there is wide variation in this category reflecting local conditions and circumstances.

Debt

The amount of debt per pupil is often considered to be a good indicator of fiscal health. Districts with low debt outstanding per pupil at the end of the 1980-81 fiscal year were Indianapolis ($12), St. Louis ($125), San Diego ($149), and Los Angeles ($330). (See Table 8). Among these, the low per pupil debt in St. Louis is certainly not a sign of robust fiscal health. High debt per pupil was found in Boston ($3,181), Chicago ($2,015), and Cleveland ($1,704). These are all city school districts with financial problems.

Bond Ratings

Table 9 shows the ratings for general obligation bonds in 1983 for the city school districts. In the case of dependent school districts, the overall city bond rating is shown. These ratings are those made by Moody's Investors Service. The highest bond ratings are held by Houston and Dallas. Also rated high quality are Los Angeles, Phoenix, Memphis, San Diego, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and San Francisco. Less desirable ratings were found for Baltimore, New Orleans, and San Antonio. Bonds issued by Detroit and St. Louis are only medium grade, while those of New York, Cleveland, and Boston are considered to have speculative elements. Finally, bonds issued by Chicago and Philadelphia are rated as lacking characteristics of desirable investments.

These bond ratings show how the financial community rates the current financial condition of the city school districts. The rating a school district receives can make a substantial difference in the interest rate paid for district borrowing.

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